United Nations S/2015/472

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 June 2015

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

I. Introduction

1. In a letter dated 23 December 2013 (S/2013/759), the President of the Security Council informed me of the Council's concurrence with my recommendation to extend the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) until 31 December 2016, and requested that I report to the Council every six months on the implementation of the mandate.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2015. It provides an overview of developments and trends in West Africa and outlines the activities undertaken by UNOWA in the areas of good offices, enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security and promoting good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights and gender mainstreaming. It also outlines the efforts of UNOWA in engaging regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Mano River Union, in order to promote peace and stability in West Africa.

II. Developments and trends in West Africa

3. Since the issuance of my last report (S/2014/945), there have been a number of key political and security developments in West Africa, particularly in countries that have held or plan to hold elections in 2015. In Nigeria, the presidential, legislative, gubernatorial and state assembly elections were conducted in a generally peaceful manner, despite the high political stakes and continuing insecurity in the north-east of the country. Presidential elections in Togo and legislative and local elections in Benin took place in a peaceful manner, notwithstanding reported technical and organizational challenges. In Guinea, tensions between the Government and the opposition escalated over the proposed sequence of the elections. In Burkina Faso, the Government's approval of an amended electoral code, which excludes some individuals associated with the ousted regime from contesting the elections, led to renewed tensions. In Sierra Leone, tensions within the ruling party led to the dismissal of Vice-President Samuel Sam-Sumana.

15-09604 (E) 260615

Please recycle

4. Challenges related to transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and cross-border security threats in the Sahel continued to affect West Africa. Among the most serious threats were the continuing attacks by violent extremists in Mali, as well as the Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria that affected the security of the Lake Chad Basin countries. On a positive note, the operational headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force, established to combat Boko Haram, was inaugurated in N'Djamena on 25 May, on the margins of the sixteenth ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

5. The global response to eliminate the Ebola outbreak in the three most-affected countries, namely Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, recorded significant achievements. On 9 May, Liberia was declared free of Ebola transmission following a period of 42 days during which no cases of new infection were reported. There were also reductions in the reported number of cases of the disease in Guinea and Sierra Leone, although a "state of health emergency" remains in effect in the two countries.

A. Political developments

6. In Nigeria, presidential and legislative elections were held on 28 March, and gubernatorial and state assembly elections took place on 11 April. Fourteen candidates, including one woman candidate, contested the presidential elections. The opposition candidate for the All Progressives Congress, Muhammadu Buhari, won 54 per cent of the presidential votes, while the incumbent President, Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party, garnered 45 per cent of the votes. Despite heightened tensions in the lead-up to the elections and strong apprehensions regarding the possibility of violence, the elections were assessed by international and national observers as being generally peaceful and transparent.

7. President Jonathan's concession of defeat on 31 March, hours before the final results were announced, played a role in preventing post-election violence in Nigeria. In conceding, he reaffirmed his commitment to free and fair elections and to peacefully accepting the outcome of the electoral process as agreed to by all presidential candidates in the Abuja accord signed on 14 January and as renewed in their collective pledges on 26 March. My Special Representative for West Africa and High-level Representative to Nigeria, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Nigeria, supported the National Peace Committee, chaired by former Head of State and retired General Abdulsalami Abubakar, in the preparation and facilitation of the signing of the Abuja accord.

8. The determination of ordinary Nigerians to vote, the integrity and professionalism of the Independent National Electoral Commission, led by Chairman Attahiru Jega, and the introduction of various safeguards to ensure the integrity of polling together contributed to the peaceful holding of the general elections. In addition, the increased engagement and coordinated messaging of regional and international actors also played a key role. In the lead-up to, during and after the elections, I spoke with both Mr. Jonathan and Mr. Buhari periodically and issued statements aimed at reducing tensions and encouraging all parties to engage in credible and peaceful elections. I also dispatched the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs to Nigeria from 16 to 18 March, accompanied by my Special

Representative, to convey similar messages to national stakeholders. He also made frequent trips to Nigeria in the lead-up to the elections and remained in the country for several days during the presidential and legislative elections until the final announcement of the results. On 29 May, Mr. Buhari was sworn in as the new President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria.

9. In Guinea, political tensions between the Government and the opposition escalated following the announcement of the electoral calendar by the Independent National Electoral Commission on 10 March. According to the calendar, the presidential elections are scheduled to take place on 11 October 2015, while the local elections will be held in March 2016. The opposition immediately rejected the proposed sequence of the elections, insisting that local elections must precede the presidential elections. They argued that the majority of mayors appointed by the ruling party had overstayed their mandate by more than six years. On 17 March 2015, the opposition withdrew their representatives from the National Assembly, declared that they no longer recognized the Independent National Electoral Commission and its decisions and announced the resumption of public demonstrations. Since then, several protest rallies have been organized throughout the country, including in the capital city, Conakry, which, in some cases, has resulted in clashes between protesters and national security forces. Several injuries and deaths have been reported during these clashes.

10. Meanwhile, the Government of Guinea maintained that the presidential election should be held in 2015 to avoid a potential constitutional crisis. They argued that they could only hold one election in 2015, owing to budgetary constraints and the need to focus on the ongoing fight against Ebola. On 20 May, President Alpha Condé met with opposition leader Cellou Dalein Diallo. The opposition welcomed the initiative. On 5 June, on instructions from the President, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Defence and the Secretary-General of the Presidency held consultations with the opposition, during which it was tentatively agreed that a national dialogue would commence on 18 June. In another development, on 11 May, the former military Head of State, Dadis Camara, who is in exile in Burkina Faso, announced his intention to run in the presidential election in Guinea.

11. In Burkina Faso, the process of transition following the popular uprising of October 2014 remains on track. On 27 January 2015, the Council of Ministers confirmed that presidential and legislative elections would be held on 11 October 2015, and municipal elections would be held on 31 January 2016. Preparations for the elections in October 2015 are well under way. In the wake of tensions related to the reorganization of the presidential guard, members of the presidential guard, on 4 February, called for the resignation of Transitional Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida, which triggered street demonstrations in support of the dissolution of the presidential guard. Following intensive consultations between political and military leaders and appeals by members of the international community, the parties agreed to address the reform of the presidential guard at a later stage. On 16 February, 26 parties of the former opposition founded the Cadre de concertation des partis politiques to monitor and track problems in the transitional process and to support the organization of transparent and credible elections.

12. On 7 April, the National Transitional Council of Burkina Faso adopted a controversial law modifying the electoral code, which banned from contesting the

upcoming elections all those who supported an unconstitutional change, challenging the principle of democratic alternation, especially the limitation of the number of presidential mandates leading to an insurrection or to any other form of uprising. The law was promulgated by Transitional President Michel Kafando on 9 April. In reaction to the adoption of this amendment, several parties aligned with the former majority coalition, the Congress for Democracy and Progress, announced their withdrawal from transitional institutions. On 15 April, parties from the former majority coalition also lodged an appeal against the amendment in the Constitutional Court. However, on 5 May, the Court rejected the appeal on technical grounds.

13. In Sierra Leone, political tensions increased following the expulsion of Vice-President Sam-Sumana from the ruling All People's Congress on 7 March and his dismissal as Vice-President on 17 March on the grounds that he no longer satisfied the constitutional requirement of being a member of a political party. In response, Mr. Sam-Sumana filed an action contesting his dismissal. Opposition and civil society groups also expressed concern over his dismissal and organized demonstrations. On 20 March, a former Secretary-General of the All People's Congress, Victor Bockarie Foh, was sworn in as the new Vice-President of Sierra Leone. An injunction filed by Mr. Sam-Sumana on 23 March to prevent Mr. Foh from acting in the office of the Vice-President was rejected by the Supreme Court on 5 May. The Court has not yet ruled on the constitutionality of Mr. Sam-Sumana's removal from office.

14. In Togo, the presidential election held on 25 April was won by incumbent President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé. On 28 April, the opposition party, the Combat pour l'alternance politique, rejected as fraudulent the preliminary results announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission and declared the leader of the party, Jean-Pierre Fabre, to be the winner of the election. On 3 May, the Constitutional Court confirmed the election victory of President Gnassingbé. The opposition has claimed that it will not challenge the results of the election in the Constitutional Court because of its bias in favour of President Gnassingbé.

15. In Benin, legislative elections were conducted on 26 April in a peaceful manner despite the sociopolitical tensions that had preceded the polls. The ruling alliance, the Forces cauris pour un Bénin emergent, won 33 of the 83 seats, 8 seats less than in the previous elections. The other contesting opposition parties and coalitions, the Union fait la nation, the Parti du renouveau démocratique, the Renaissance du Bénin and the Forces démocratiques unies, won 13, 10, 7 and 4 seats, respectively. Some opposition parties accused the ruling coalition of fraud and of using the state apparatus in its campaign. The Constitutional Court proclaimed the final results of the legislative elections on 3 May. On 19 May, the Constitutional Court authorized the postponement of the local elections until 28 June.

B. Security trends

16. The security situation in West Africa remains fragile. In Mali, clashes between armed groups and attacks by armed groups against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and government forces increased.

17. The activities of Boko Haram against civilians in the north-east of Nigeria peaked in the first half of the reporting period. On 3 January, the group conducted

an attack on the remote town of Baga, Borno State, which destroyed the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force. Following the withdrawal of military forces from the area, Boko Haram reportedly killed several hundred civilians. On 25 January, Boko Haram fighters launched an attempt to take over Maiduguri but were eventually repelled after a protracted confrontation with Nigerian security forces. During the first quarter of 2015, at least 24 incidents of suicide bombings took place in the states of Yobe (8 incidents), Gombe (5), Kani (1) and Borno (10); the incidents involved 31 suicide bombers, 4 of whom were reported to be children. Meanwhile, sporadic insurgency attacks have continued in north-east Nigeria.

18. The Niger continues to face security risks, particularly in areas along its borders with Libya, Mali and Nigeria. From 8 to 12 February, Boko Haram insurgents launched a succession of cross-border attacks, including three suicide attacks, on the border cities of Bosso and Diffa, in the Niger. On 25 April, Boko Haram militants attacked Karamga, a strategic island in Lake Chad, killing at least 50 soldiers and prompting the Government of the Niger to order the evacuation of all inhabited islands prior to a large-scale military operation in the area. On 6 May, militants raided the border town of Koukodou in the Niger, where at least five people were killed. Since the beginning of the year, the authorities of the Niger have witnessed a dramatic increase in refugees and returnees to the south-western region of Diffa. The overpopulation of Diffa, the unstable security environment and limited humanitarian access and resources have led to increased tension within local communities. This has been compounded by concerns over the possible infiltration of Boko Haram militants in the area and the group's recruitment of fighters from among the returnees and refugees.

19. In late February and March, coordinated operations of forces from Chad, the Niger and Nigeria succeeded in wresting a number of locations from Boko Haram's control. On 18 February, Monguno and Marte in Borno State were retaken by the Nigerian military, which also seized the town of Baga in Borno State four days later. On 2 February, Chadian forces recaptured the strategic border town of Gamboru, followed by Dikwa on 2 March and Damasak on 9 March, all located in Borno State. Nigerian forces took over Bama and Gwoza, Borno State, on 16 and 27 March, respectively. In April, the Nigerian army commenced operations in the Sambisa forest. Between 28 April and 6 May, a spokesperson for the Nigerian army announced the freeing of at least 787 women and children who had been kidnapped by Boko Haram. More than 20 makeshift camps, previously used by Boko Haram elements in the area, were reported to have been destroyed during the operation. The total number of freed Boko Haram hostages reached approximately 1,000 at the end of May and has continued to increase since then. Recent information suggests that the capabilities of Boko Haram were significantly reduced as a result of joint regional military efforts under the Multinational Joint Task Force. Nonetheless, the group remains active.

20. There was evidence of transatlantic drug trafficking during the reporting period. On 15 January, the Spanish navy intercepted a shipment of 1.5 tons of cocaine in the Atlantic Ocean, 80 miles west of Cabo Verde, on a vessel en route to the Canary Islands, Spain. On 20 April, authorities in the Niger intercepted a shipment of nearly 3 tons of cannabis that was being escorted by a group of heavily armed smugglers in the mountains in the northern part of the country. In April, the transnational organized crime unit in Sierra Leone supported an international

investigation to determine the origin of 9 tons of cannabis resin ("hashish") that had been seized on a ship navigating under a Sierra Leonean flag in Moroccan waters. Trafficking in amphetamine-type stimulants also remains a major source of concern in West Africa; 120 kilograms of amphetamine-type stimulants were seized in the subregion during the reporting period.

C. Humanitarian trends

21. The humanitarian situation in West Africa remains a matter of great concern, largely due to the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and the impact of the Ebola outbreak on Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In the Sahel, some 20 million people continue to struggle with food insecurity. In February, partners launched the Sahel response plan for 2015, seeking $1.96 billion to assist 9.3 million food-insecure people, 9 million people at risk of epidemics and 3.2 million acutely malnourished children, as well as to provide safe water and sanitation for over 4 million people in nine countries.

22. Violence and conflict have triggered a new surge in large-scale displacements in the Lake Chad Basin area. In the north-east of Nigeria, nearly 1.5 million people have been displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency, an increase of 28 per cent since the start of the year. Nearly 60 per cent of those displaced are persons under 18 years old. The majority of those displaced persons live in host communities, and the remainder live in camps or camp-like sites. Meanwhile, food insecurity has worsened, and in the coming months some 3 million Nigerians in the north-east are expected to require assistance. An estimated 157,000 refugees and 53,000 returnees have fled to Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, putting an additional strain on highly vulnerable host communities. Insecurity and logistical constraints continue to hamper humanitarian access in Nigeria, particularly in areas liberated from Boko Haram by the Multinational Joint Task Force.

23. The Niger continues to be one of the countries in the Sahel that are the most vulnerable to malnutrition. Food insecurity has affected 2.5 million people, representing 15 per cent of the rural population. In the Diffa region, insecurity and an influx of people fleeing the Boko Haram insurgency have exacerbated a situation that is already fragile due to the poor agricultural season. The vast majority of the 66,000 internally displaced persons and 105,600 refugees from Nigeria live with host families and have very limited access to humanitarian assistance. To compound the situation, the meningitis outbreak in Niamey and in the Dosso region has reached an epidemic level, with over 6,000 suspected cases since the beginning of 2015, compared with 154 cases in 2014.

24. The Ebola outbreak has generated immense needs in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, though the number of cases has significantly decreased. The disease has left more than 16,000 children without one or both parents, while 5 million have been deprived of learning opportunities due to school closures. More than 1.2 million people are currently food-insecure and require immediate assistance. Moreover, over 2.2 million people risk experiencing critical levels of food insecurity during the lean season. The United Nations is preparing to host a high-level meeting on 9 and 10 July to support post-Ebola recovery coordination and resource mobilization efforts.

D. Trends on human rights

25. Despite positive developments related to the conduct of peaceful elections in a number of countries, the human rights situation in West Africa remains fragile. Recurrent strikes throughout the subregion have restricted the right to education of a generation of youth in a period marked by high unemployment. While increased sensitization regarding Ebola has raised awareness, identity-based discrimination and stigmatization, including a ban on pregnant girls attending school in Sierra Leone, are matters of concern. On 23 March, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone warned about the discriminatory imposition of a state of emergency due to the Ebola outbreak, which, according to the Commission, restricted the right to freedom of assembly and the right to freedom of association.

26. In Nigeria, the indiscriminate violence and killing of civilians by Boko Haram have continued. Several mass graves and execution sites have been discovered following the recapture of areas that were under the control of Boko Haram. Moreover, children have continued to be recruited and abducted by the group, while women and young girls are increasingly being used as sex slaves and for suicide attacks. There were also reports of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by Nigerian security forces during counter-insurgency operations. On 17 February, an unidentified plane bombed a funeral gathering near a mosque in the village of Abadam in the Niger, reportedly killing 36 civilians. In Nigeria, the recruitment and use of children by the civilian joint task force in Borno State and other militia in the states of Adamawa and Yobe were also reported. The approximately 1,000 women and children liberated by Nigerian forces in areas previously under the control of Boko Haram are reportedly being provided with support for rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities. On 25 May, the long-awaited bill on the prohibition of violence against persons became law, providing a legal framework for the prevention of all forms of violence against vulnerable persons, especially women and girls. It prohibits female genital mutilation, the abandonment of spouses, children and other dependants without sustenance, battery and other harmful traditional practices against women and children.

27. In Mauritania, human rights groups called for the release of anti-slavery activists, including Biram Dah Abeid, the winner of the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights and leader of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement, who had been arrested following demonstrations in November 2014. The use of excessive force also remains a matter of concern in other countries, notably in Guinea, where the intervention by security forces during opposition demonstrations between April and May 2015 led to fatalities.

28. In the Gambia, dozens of military personnel and civilians, including the family members of those accused of being involved in an attempted coup d'état that had taken place on 30 December 2014, were arrested, questioned and detained without charge. The National Intelligence Agency of the Gambia reportedly conducted door-to-door searches in the days following the incident. On 2 April 2015, following a court martial, three of the military officers involved in the incident were sentenced to death, while three others received sentences of life imprisonment. In a separate case, the trials of three men accused of "homosexual acts" are taking place. The men face up to 15 years of imprisonment if found guilty. Prior to their transfer to prison, the men were reportedly subjected to acts of torture during their detention at the headquarters of the National Intelligence Agency.

29. In Guinea, on 2 June, the National Assembly passed a bill aimed at regulating the use of force during demonstrations. The National Assembly also passed a bill introducing penalties of up to five years' imprisonment for offending or defaming the President and other public officials. Both bills passed in the absence of the opposition, which had withdrawn its representatives from the legislative body in protest over the electoral calendar announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission.

E. Trends on gender issues

30. Some progress was achieved in the political and electoral participation of women in West Africa during the reporting period. Several countries, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, increased the number or the position of women in their electoral management bodies. Women's civil society groups were involved in the electoral process in Benin, Nigeria and Togo, including through the "women's situation rooms" that were set up during the recent elections in those countries. In Togo, President Gnassingbé appointed Amadou Abdou-Nana Awa-Daboya as the chairperson of a commission on political, institutional and constitutional reforms. In Benin and the Niger, steps were taken to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and support was requested from UNOWA in the mobilization of financial and human resources for the adoption and implementation of the national action plans.

F. Socioeconomic trends

31. The Ebola outbreak has continued to negatively affect local economies, cross-border trade, farming activities and production industries in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. According to World Bank estimates, on 17 April, the total loss of gross domestic product in the affected countries reached $2.2 billion. The Ebola outbreak has also disrupted the countries' progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, collecting taxes and investing in infrastructure and social services.

32. Overall, the reporting period saw a considerable slackening in the mining sector in West Africa, which further aggravated unemployment and affected state revenues. The lull in construction and other employment-generating activities, including in the informal sector, continued to have a significant impact on livelihoods, especially affecting women, youth and poor rural households.

33. Challenges linked to climate change and successive droughts, as well as lack of opportunities for youth, contributed to increased migration. In May 2015, the International Organization for Migration reported that Gambians, Malians, Nigerians and Senegalese accounted for most of the persons migrating from West Africa to Europe.

34. The education sector in some countries in West Africa was negatively affected by strikes or quarantine measures resulting from the Ebola outbreak, leading to an extension of the school year in some countries. Among the countries affected were Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

35. During the reporting period, ECOWAS launched the sea link initiative, which is aimed at operationalizing maritime shipping and minimizing the challenges related to the movement of people, goods and services in the subregion. The initiative, which will link West African and Central African countries, is expected to boost trade and enhance economic growth in West Africa.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

A. Good offices and special assignments by my Special Representative

Nigeria

36. Given the increasing political tensions in the lead-up to the presidential, legislative, gubernatorial and state assembly elections in Nigeria in March and April, my Special Representative for West Africa travelled regularly to the country to engage with national stakeholders with a view to defusing tensions, supporting efforts to prevent election-related violence and encouraging efforts to combat Boko Haram. He held a series of consultations with key political figures, human rights actors, civil society representatives, religious leaders, the Sultan of Sokoto, the Bishop of Sokoto and the heads of military, intelligence and security agencies. He also participated in the inaugural meeting of the National Peace Committee on 25 January.

37. From 15 March to 4 April, my Special Representative remained in Nigeria, working closely with the heads of electoral observer missions from the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and the Commonwealth, as well as international partners, as part of efforts to coordinate support for peaceful elections in Nigeria and support of relevant national authorities. He also worked closely with the United Nations country team, which provided technical support for the elections, in addition to carrying out its broader mandated activities.

Guinea

38. During the reporting period, my Special Representative conducted several missions to Guinea to support efforts to defuse tension and encourage political dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition. In his meetings with President Condé, government ministers, members of the opposition parties and the ruling coalition, he reiterated the need to maintain national unity and cohesion and ensure the necessary conditions to respond to the Ebola outbreak. He also emphasized the need to build a political atmosphere conducive to the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections.

39. From 23 to 26 April, an electoral needs assessment mission of the United Nations visited Guinea at the invitation of the Government. The mission concluded that the conditions were not conducive to the holding of the local elections because of, inter alia, the lack of consensus on the electoral calendar. Nonetheless, the mission recommended that the United Nations provide technical assistance and support donor resource mobilization pending the resolution of the issues related to the electoral calendar.

40. My Special Representative will continue to work closely with national stakeholders and international partners to help defuse tension and build confidence

prior to the elections. He deployed a small team to Guinea on 23 May to assist in monitoring developments in the country and to provide advisory support to the Resident Coordinator.

Burkina Faso

41. In Burkina Faso, my Special Representative continued to support the process of transition, in close coordination with regional and international stakeholders. The International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso, co-chaired by my Special Representative along with the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Smail Chergui, and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, met in Ouagadougou on 13 January and 30 March and in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 12 June. During the meetings, participants expressed satisfaction with the progress made in the transitional process.

42. On 4 February, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, accompanied by my Special Representative, visited Burkina Faso to hold consultations with the transitional authorities and representatives of political parties and civil society. The visit coincided with growing tensions in the country following a request by the presidential guard for the resignation of Transitional Prime Minister Zida. The two officials emphasized that the international community would not tolerate any obstacles to the successful completion of the transition in Burkina Faso and called on all parties to ensure that the transitional process remained on track.

43. An electoral needs assessment mission was deployed to Burkina Faso in January following a request from the Transitional Government for United Nations assistance. The mission identified four areas in which increased technical and operational assistance would need to be provided to the national electoral institutions. There is currently a budgetary shortfall of $30 million in the $9[illegible] million election budget. The United Nations will continue to support efforts to mobilize resources to fill the funding gap, including through the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso.

Sierra Leone

44. In response to the political tensions in Sierra Leone over the dismissal of former Vice-President Sam-Sumana, my Special Representative travelled to Freetown on 21 March to meet with President Ernest Bai Koroma and Mr. Sam-Sumana, as well as international stakeholders, and convey my concern that political upheavals should not distract from the ongoing Ebola response and recovery efforts and reiterate the importance of maintaining national cohesion and respect for the Constitution. The President gave his assurances that the Government remained focused on the fight against Ebola and would work towards de-escalating tension. Mr. Sam-Sumana also gave assurances that he would pursue a resolution of the matter through legal means.

Togo

45. My Special Representative travelled to Togo with the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union on 12 January and the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs on 3 February, with a view to urging political stakeholders to engage in peaceful and transparent elections. He visited Lomé again from 27 to

30 April with the objective of consulting with all relevant political and electoral stakeholders to defuse tensions prior to the announcement of the election results. He met with key national stakeholders, including the Independent National Electoral Commission and opposition candidate Jean-Pierre Fabre. That was done in close coordination with the African Union, ECOWAS and international observer missions present in the country.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

46. Notwithstanding the security challenges related to Boko Haram, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission made significant progress in resolving outstanding areas of disagreement between the two parties. Field assessments and demarcations were conducted relying principally on cartographic methodologies. Agreement was reached on coordinates extending over 2,001 kilometres of the land boundary, which significantly enhances prospects for the completion of the demarcation without further field assessments. The parties also agreed on coordinates for the emplacement of the remaining 1,800 pillars, which will complete the physical demarcation of the entire Cameroon-Nigeria land boundary. To date, 896 pillars have been put into position or are subject to current action. A joint technical team conducted an inspection mission from 10 January to 16 February to review the condition of pillars positioned in the southernmost part of the Nigerian boundary. The inspection mission confirmed that the pillars were in good condition and in full compliance with contractual expectations.

47. During the reporting period, confidence-building initiatives for populations affected by the demarcation continued. Following a request by the Government of Cameroon to review the socioeconomic projects, the United Nations support team for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission undertook a mission to assess population displacements in the border areas affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, particularly along the northern border. Feasibility studies and cost estimates for the socioeconomic projects in Nigeria will be finalized during the last quarter of 2015.

48. In support of the implementation of measures agreed to during the summit of Heads of State on security in Nigeria, held in Paris on 17 May 2014, a concept note was developed in collaboration with the Lake Chad Basin Commission during the period under review. According to the note, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission will provide technical support to the Lake Chad Basin Commission secretariat for the design and implementation of a rapid action plan, a socioeconomic project for women and youth and support for the rehabilitation and densification of the boundary in the Lake Chad area.

49. My Special Representative continued to engage with the parties to the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission in his capacity as Chairman of the Commission. The next meeting of the heads of delegation is expected to take place shortly. In the meantime, the United Nations support team for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission has designed a completion strategy that will serve as a road map for delivering the specific outstanding activities related to the mandate of the Commission, notably, the confidence-building projects, the pillar emplacement operations and the final mapping exercise.

B. Enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security

50. On 2 February, UNOWA and the Lake Chad Basin Commission organized a workshop on threats to peace and security in the Lake Chad Basin and cooperation between the Commission and regional United Nations entities. The workshop brought together 61 participants, including the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as representatives of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, ECOWAS, civil society and research institutes. United Nations entities, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, participated in the meeting. The discussion focused on the structure and objectives of Boko Haram and its modus operandi, the provision of humanitarian assistance to the affected population and the need for additional United Nations assistance in environmental and socioeconomic matters.

United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel

51. UNOWA, as the convener of the working group on security of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, has supported the implementation of the Strategy. The Working Group identified three main projects for implementation: (a) the UNODC capacity-building project to combat drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism and corruption; (b) the provision of technical assistance by the Economic Commission for Africa to enhance small arms control, physical security and stockpile management in the Sahel; and (c) the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism project on violent extremism and radicalization in the Sahel. As of May 2015, more than 2,500 people in the Sahel have directly benefited from the UNODC capacity-building project.

Cross-border security strategy for the Mano River Union

52. The Ebola outbreak stalled activities that were to take place under the Mano River Union cross-border security strategy. However, support for national and regional responses to Ebola continued. With the assistance of UNOWA, the joint border security and confidence-building units established under the strategy supported sensitization and coordination efforts in response to the Ebola outbreak. The Mano River Union secretariat conducted media campaigns and training for the unit members and held national consultative meetings that brought together traditional leaders, youth and women's groups. The Mano River Union has also been engaged in post-Ebola recovery efforts and has held several meetings to ensure that planning for the recovery phase takes into account regional dimensions of the outbreak.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

53. Little progress was achieved in the implementation of the decisions adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, held in Yaoundé in June 2013. That was because of the focus in the region on addressing the threat posed by Boko Haram, as well as the lack of

logistical and financial resources to implement the agreed road map. Since its inauguration, the Inter-regional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea has not commenced operations due to administrative obstacles and delays in onboarding staff on secondment from member States. Similarly, the regional coordination centre for maritime security in West Africa has not been established. UNOWA, in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), is continuing its advocacy of international support to facilitate the work of the Inter-regional Coordination Centre.

54. On 13 March, UNOWA, together with UNOCA, participated in the launching of the ECOWAS Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre. From 11 to 12 May 2015, UNOWA, UNOCA and other partners in West Africa and Central Africa participated in a meeting of the Group of Seven and Friends of the Gulf of Guinea held in Pointe-Noire, Republic of the Congo. The meeting was convened to mobilize support for the implementation of the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of Central and West African States on Maritime Safety and Security in Their Common Maritime Domain, done at Yaoundé on 25 June 2013, the code of conduct and the memorandum of understanding on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Security sector reform

55. In Guinea, national efforts to reform the security sector have been hindered by the Ebola outbreak. Further to the 2014 national strategy for priority action, the United Nations assisted the national technical monitoring commission in the preparatory work for the amended 2015 budget law, including the integration of elements of the strategy in three priority areas, namely, the strengthening of security sector governance, the enhancement of operational capacities and improvement of the civil-military relationship.

56. The United Nations participated in a Joint Assessment Mission to Guinea-Bissau, led by the African Union from 2 to 12 March. The Mission made recommendations on the gaps and deficiencies in security sector reform and identified opportunities to assist the Government in its effort to reform security institutions in line with national priorities, the African Union Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform and Security Council resolution 2203 (2015).

Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

57. The Ebola outbreak continued to slow down the activities of the transnational crime units established under the West Africa Coast Initiative in Liberia and Sierra Leone and prevented the creation of the transnational crime unit in Guinea. Notwithstanding the Ebola outbreak, the transnational crime unit in Sierra Leone has resumed its daily operations, including criminal investigations. In Liberia, the United Nations Mission in Liberia continued to build the capacity of the transnational crime unit through the training of specialized staff. In Guinea-Bissau, the re-establishment of the transnational crime unit is being fast-tracked by national authorities, and the unit is expected to be fully operational by mid-2015. UNODC and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire have continued to support national authorities in Côte d'Ivoire in establishing a transnational crime unit, in accordance with a decree issued in November 2014.

Counter-terrorism and Boko Haram

58. In response to the rising threat posed by Boko Haram, my Special Representative participated in the ministerial meeting of the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin in Niamey on 20 January, where the discussion focused on the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force.

59. On 29 January, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, at its 484th meeting, authorized the deployment of the Multinational Joint Task Force for an initial period of 12 months, with a mandated strength of up to 7,500 military personnel. On 3 March, the troop ceiling was increased to 10,000 personnel. UNOWA participated in two meetings of experts, one held in Yaoundé from 5 to 7 February and the other in N'Djamena from 23 to 27 February, to advance the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force and the development of the Task Force's strategic concept of operations. On 25 May, the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force was inaugurated in N'Djamena, on the margins of the sixteenth ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS. On 9 June, senior defence officials from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria met in Abuja to discuss, prior to the summit of Heads of State of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to be held on 11 June, the future of joint operations to combat Boko Haram.

60. On 29 January, my Special Representative for West Africa participated in the 484th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. From 13 to 18 April, my Special Representative for West Africa and my Special Representative for Central Africa undertook a diplomatic tour of countries affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, where they met with the Presidents of Benin, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, the Prime Minister of Cameroon and the President-elect of Nigeria. From 23 to 25 May, the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union and my Special Representatives conducted a joint mission to countries affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, before attending the ceremony for the inauguration of the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force in N'Djamena.

C. Promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming

61. On 23 March, UNOWA organized a meeting with regional representatives of civil society organizations and networks, aimed at fostering an exchange on human rights and rule of law. A second meeting was held on 26 March, focusing on governance of natural resources and the promotion of sustainable peace in West Africa. UNOWA supported a civil society forum held in Banjul from 17 to 22 April, on the margins of the fifty-sixth ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights; representatives of about 200 organizations attended the forum, discussing challenges to human rights and the rule of law in West Africa.

62. In Dakar on 12 January, UNOWA participated in an ECOWAS meeting of experts on gender and women's affairs on the theme "Gender equality and sustainable development"; the participants assessed the impact of the ECOWAS legal framework for gender equality and women's empowerment. UNOWA also contributed to the revision of Senegal's national strategy on gender equality and equity and convened two sessions of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa, sharing good practices and lessons learned. In addition,

from 15 to 26 March, UNOWA, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Gorée Institute, participated in a joint mission to Benin and Togo to support the establishment of "women's situation rooms" as part of the efforts to ensure peaceful, non-violent and inclusive elections.

63. On 27 March, UNOWA participated in the launch of a communication network on women, peace and security at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, aimed at building support for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions on women, peace and security. Throughout the reporting period, UNOWA continued to work with regional stakeholders and United Nations entities to finalize the evaluation of the regional plan to implement Council resolution 1325 (2000).

D. Inter-institutional cooperation

United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

64. My Special Representative for West Africa held regular meetings with the regional heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes based in Dakar to share information and strengthen cooperation. On 23 February, he briefed the Regional Directors' Team on political developments in the region, particularly the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency on the north-eastern part of Nigeria and neighbouring countries. On 10 April, my Special Representative for West Africa, my Special Representative for Central Africa and my Special Envoy for the Sahel took part in an inter-office retreat in Dakar to discuss synergies involving their three offices and identify areas to strengthen cooperation.

65. On 19 and 20 April, my Special Representative for West Africa participated in the UNDP regional consultations on peace, security and development in Central Africa and West Africa, held in Yaoundé. The participants developed a shared understanding of the regional dimensions of the Boko Haram insurgency and the crisis in the Central African Republic and identified synergies and opportunities for collaboration and coordinated efforts.

66. In Dakar on 8 May, UNOWA convened the 27th consultative meeting of Heads of United Nations Peace Missions in West Africa, which reviewed developments in the subregion, as well as progress made in the implementation of their mandates.

Cooperation with regional and subregional partners

67. Throughout the reporting period, UNOWA remained engaged with the Mano River Union with a view to finalizing the regional Ebola rehabilitation strategy. In addition, UNOWA contributed to the United Nations Ebola recovery assessment mission and supported the exchange of information with regional institutions and peace missions, focusing on the implementation of the Mano River Union cross-border security strategy. UNOWA also continued to engage with the Mano River Union secretariat in activating the resource mobilization plan adopted in Abidjan in June 2014 to enable the implementation of the strategy.

68. From 2 to 6 March, my Special Representative travelled to Brussels, London and Paris, where he held consultations with the European Union, the Commonwealth, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the secretariat of the African,

Caribbean and Pacific States on efforts to ensure peace and stability in West Africa, particularly the fight against Boko Haram and the post-Ebola rehabilitation efforts.

69. From 27 April to 3 May, UNOWA, together with ECOWAS and the African Union, conducted a joint post-election assessment of the political and security situation in Nigeria to help identify the areas and scope for future international assistance.

Observations and recommendations

70. I welcome the peaceful holding of general elections in Nigeria that has set a positive example for the region to follow. These elections have shown the determination of the Nigerian people to bring about democratic governance through a peaceful process. I salute the political leaders for putting the interest of the country before party politics, and I hope that the aspirations of the Nigerian people will be upheld and respected.

71. I remain deeply concerned about the continuing attacks by Boko Haram and its destabilizing humanitarian, human rights and security impact on the Lake Chad Basin region, particularly north-eastern Nigeria. The recent attacks by Boko Haram and its capture of Marte town in Borno State on 16 May are a reminder that the group's residual capabilities should not be underestimated. Efforts by regional and subregional actors to address this threat should continue in full compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. I welcome the recent establishment of the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force in N'Djamena, and I call on the international community to support the operationalization of the Task Force by mobilizing the requisite political, logistical and financial support and providing the necessary expertise.

72. The United Nations is committed to working closely with regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS, ECCAS and the Lake Chad Basin Commission in order to continue strengthening regional cooperation to address cross-border security threats and prevent the spread of violent extremism and terrorism. I encourage ECOWAS and ECCAS to hold the planned summit of Heads of State to address the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency in a holistic and integrated manner. UNOWA will continue to support these efforts in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities.

73. I welcome the release of hundreds of women and children from Boko Haram captivity and note that national authorities, with support from relevant United Nations entities, are providing the needed assistance. The United Nations system in Nigeria, with the support of my Special Representative for West Africa and High-level Representative to Nigeria, will continue to cooperate with relevant stakeholders in support of national stabilization efforts, particularly in the north-east of Nigeria, as outlined in the new Government's priorities. This would enable the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees. I reiterate the readiness of the United Nations to support the Nigerian authorities, as well as the authorities of neighbouring countries, with humanitarian assistance. In this regard, I call on Member States to contribute generously to the United Nations operations.

74. I welcome the holding of peaceful presidential elections in Togo. I urge national stakeholders to continue to engage in dialogue towards the consolidation of

democratic institutions and electoral reform. I commend the people of Benin on the peaceful conduct of parliamentary elections. In Guinea, my Special Representative will continue to support efforts to defuse tensions between the Government and the opposition and assist in creating an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful, credible and fair elections. I urge Guinean political stakeholders to engage in dialogue to address, through consensus, all contentious issues. I also call on national, regional and international partners to provide support for the successful holding of the elections.

75. The upcoming elections in Burkina Faso will need to be closely monitored, as the transition has shown recurrent signs of fragility in recent months. The role being played by the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso is commendable; this mechanism is one of the best examples of effective regional and international preventive diplomacy.

76. The subregion continues to face serious human rights concerns, including reported violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Nigeria. I welcome the Government's commitment to addressing both the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency and the more recent human rights concerns. I am concerned about attacks on civilians in Mali and Nigeria, abuses reported in the Gambia since the attempted coup in December 2014 and episodes of violence during recent demonstrations in Benin and Guinea. In the upcoming elections, the risk of political and electoral violence remains particularly high in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. I urge the Governments, the opposition parties and their supporters in those countries to exercise restraint during rallies and to refrain from using inflammatory language that may incite violence.

77. I welcome the encouraging progress achieved in the Ebola response in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and the resolute commitment of thousands of health-care workers who remained at the front lines during and in the aftermath of the outbreak. I note with concern, however, that some aspects of the national responses affected the socioeconomic situation and curtailed civil liberties. I encourage national authorities to continue the fight against the epidemic until the objective of zero Ebola cases is reached while ensuring that the fundamental human rights of its citizens are fully respected. The achievement of the objective is also crucial to the reactivation of key regional processes that have been slowed down by the impact of the epidemic. I urge donors and regional organizations to coordinate closely with United Nations entities and national authorities in support of each country's reconstruction plans.

78. Maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea remains an issue of concern. I encourage States and regional and subregional organizations to remain committed to fully implementing the decisions of the Yaoundé summit. I strongly encourage West African States to work together to establish and operationalize the planned regional coordination centre for maritime security in West Africa. I also call on States in the region and partners to provide the necessary resources for the completion of the information-sharing architecture in the Gulf of Guinea. UNOWA, in collaboration with UNOCA, will continue to assist the Central and West African subregions in mobilizing resources to achieve these objectives. I also call on member States of the West Africa Coast Initiative to reinforce the existing transnational crime units, and I urge the international community to support the joint efforts of ECOWAS, the

International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the United Nations in this regard.

79. I commend the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for its continued efforts to implement the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002 and complete the demarcation exercise. I encourage the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria to resolve the outstanding areas of disagreement for the demarcation to create conditions conducive to the swift completion of the border demarcation. My Special Representative will continue to work with both countries, towards reaching a conclusive settlement of the land boundary this year. This will enable the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and the two parties to focus their resources and attention to support activities for cross-border development projects and final mapping.

80. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Governments of States in West Africa, the ECOWAS Commission, the African Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Mano River Union for their continued cooperation with the United Nations in efforts to address challenges to peace and security in the region. I also wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative for West Africa, as well as the staff of UNOWA, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and all United Nations entities in West Africa for their efforts to advance peace and security in the region.